

2013 Letters About Literature Level 2 winner

Emma Morris' letter to Jodi Picoult, author of *My Sister's Keeper*

Dear Ms. Picoult,

I never imagined that I could be a hero. Before reading My Sister's Keeper, my idea of a hero was someone who catches a victim falling from a tall building or stops a villain from taking over the world. But now I know that real heroes walk our streets every day, and they are blood donors. They are people that I know and people who care about saving lives and helping others reach milestones. Your book has changed me and opened my mind to the challenges of cancer, as well as the need for blood donors and special medical doctors. But instead of admiring these heroes from afar, you have ignited a passion in me that will only be fulfilled by doing what I can to help save the lives of children with cancer, just like Anna did.

I never knew how vital cancer specialists could be in helping young patients fight the disease, and I never knew how an entire family could truly be affected. In your story, I saw how cancer took its toll on Kate, leaving behind a frail shell of a person. Then, I saw how platelets revived her, restarting the natural processes that sustain life. After reading your story, I yearned to know more about genetics and biology. I also became determined to help others. In fact, I just organized my first blood drive with the American Red Cross and my scout organization. It was a big success and we collected 35 pints of blood. As I plan for my second blood drive event, I hope that a few pints will go to a little girl fighting for her life against the deadly disease. And as soon as I am old enough, I plan to donate myself.

In addition, I will volunteer in the pediatric ward at UNC Hospitals in April. Shadowing an oncology nurse, I want to help children like Kate. And I know that in spite of the loving care given to these children, their frailness will contrast with their bright smiles and crush me, and grasp at my heart so that I will feel the need for a cure even more. I know that my joys will be their joys, their fears will be my fears, and their pain will be my pain. I know that I will want to protect them from the monsters in the closet, the shock of a needle in their arms and tell them they will be okay. And you, Ms. Picoult, you have encouraged me to do this. I felt all of these things for Kate. When she laughed, I was happy, when she was fighting for her life, I was in the trenches with her, and when she wanted to give up, I wanted to make sure that she was comfortable.

You sent a clear message to me in *My Sister's Keeper* that has left me wanting to make a difference in other people's lives. At the same time, you opened my eyes to the realities of this disease

and the need for more research. This story has worked its way into my soul, clinging to my thoughts and actions, and changing my views on people in need. You have inspired me, Ms. Picoult, and made me want to take action. Now I am ready to plunge in headfirst and take on the challenge of helping children who are sick with cancer. This is my dream.

With great respect,

Emma Morris